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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - ON AND OFF FIGHTING IN MOGADISHU CONTINUES AMIDST

SOME TFG GAINS

11. (SBU) Summary: According to well-placed sources within and outside of the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG), on and

off fighting continues in Mogadishu between TFG forces, al-Shabaab and other extremists, with the TFG making some gains in western areas

of the city. A May 31 gain by the TFG in eastern Mogadishu was reversed on June 3, when al-Shabaab re-took the Yaqshiid District Police Station. A reportedly large TFG force controls Beledweyne, the capital of Hiran Region, and the TFG is planning to use the force

in the coming days to attempt to push al-Shabaab out of the Hiran towns of Buulobarde and Maxaas. In addition, there are unconfirmed

reports of deep divisions between al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam leadership regarding the rationale for continued violence. End summary.

Fighting in Mogadishu

12. (SBU) There has been on and off fighting of varying intensity between TFG troops and al-Shabaab and other extremists in different

areas of Mogadishu since May 31. In a May 31 offensive, TFG troops gained control of Yaqshiid District Police Station and its immediate

surroundings in Eastern Mogadishu. However, two days of counter-attacks by extremists caused the TFG troops to backslide and lose control of the police station midday on June 3. Sources within the

TFG told us a lack of timely supplies of ammunition and reinforcements forced their troops to retreat from the police station

amid heavy pressure from extremists. Yaqshiid District is predominantly Hawiye/Abgal/Waeyse territory, and initial TFG success

in the area is partly attributed to the participation and support of members of this sub-sub-clan.

13. (SBU) Fighting also broke out in the far-western district of Dharkenley on June 2 after TFG troops attacked al-Shabaab positions

in the area. The fighting, which was reportedly fierce, saw al-Shabaab fighters lose control of the strategic Dharkenley Police Station to TFG troops. Control of Dharkenley District and Hoosh

neighborhood in particular, where most of the fighting was concentrated, will interrupt al-Shabaab reinforcement and supply routes from Lower Shabelle Region.

14. (SBU) TFG military chief General Yusuf Hussein Osman "Dhuumaal" told us successive battle victories on these two fronts have boosted his troops' morale. Non-TFG sources in Mogadishu have told us that TFG troops have maintained the upper hand in all the battle encounters and have gained significant ground.

15. (SBU) General Dhuumaal told us his troops are facing serious communication and transportation constraints. He requested communications equipment and pickup trucks to ease transportation needs.

16. (SBU) After a botched offensive in early May in Bakara Market, TFG troops reportedly now avoid the market area for strategic reasons despite the presence of extremist fighters in the area. There are reports that the TFG is liaising with the business community and militias present in the market to non-violently facilitate civilian use of the market, instead of conducting an offensive in the area, to avoid unnecessary loss of life and property.

TFG Controls Beledweyne, Plans to Launch Offensive in Hiran Region

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17. (SBU) According to TFG Minister of Security Omar Hashi, there are many TFG troops in Hiran Region and the TFG is in full control of Beledweyne, the regional capital. Hashi says the TFG plans to send troops to Buulobarde and Maxaas, both in Hiran Region, to expel al-Shabaab from those two towns in the coming days. Hashi has been meeting with clan and sub-clan elders in Hiran Region discussing security in the region and support for the TFG. Hashi says he does not expect fighting in Beledweyne because TFG troops have overwhelming force in the town and extremist forces fear him as Beledweyne is his home town and he commands much respect across all sub-clans. Hashi plans to return to Mogadishu by road once he is done meeting with elders.

Divisions Among Al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam

18. (SBU) There are unconfirmed reports of deep divisions between al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam leadership regarding the rationale for continued violence. Khalif Farah, a keen observer of Mogadishu politics, told us that Hassan Dahir Aweys is frustrated as his expectation of a quick "knock out" victory against the TFG becomes more elusive each passing day. In a recent meeting in Mogadishu, members of Aweys' Ayr sub-clan reiterated its confidence with and support for the TFG.

RANNEBERGER